DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 076 066 FL 003 801

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TITLE A New System for Classification of Chinese Characters: Initial Three-Stroke Index System (Tou San-Bi Jyandzfa).
PUB DATE 25 Nov 72
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Chinese Language Teachers Association Conference, Atlanta, Ga., November 25, 1972

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Autoinstructional Aids; *Classification; *Dictionaries; *Ideography; Instructional Aids; *Mandarin Chinese; *Permuted Indexes; Teaching Models

ABSTRACT

Since the 17th century, Chinese lexicography has been dominated by a character classification system divided into 214 radical groups. The proposed initial three-stroke system would eliminate the need to select (or guess) the proper radical and count strokes. The aim of the system is to facilitate the use of dictionaries and provide the student with a better base for independent study. In the new system the strokes of characters are classified into five groups in the order of: (1) horizontal, (2) vertical, (3) down-left, (4) dot, and (5) turned strokes. The initial three-stroke directions of all characters are then identified by digits from the number groups and, if necessary, further sub-grouped by succeeding strokes. This new system, which will require further study and improvement, is a combination of several existing systems. In particular, it will give priority to teaching stroke recognition, proper stroke order in writing, and recognition of differences between printed forms and longhand. (RS)

ED 076066

INITIAL THREE-STROKE INDEX SYSTEM 頭三筆檢字法

Tóu Sān-Bǐ Jyǎndžfǎ

C. K. Wu & K.S. Wu

The traditional system for classification of Chinese characters is to divide them into 214 groups, each group having a radical. This has dominated Chinese lexicography since the publication of 字彙 Dž Hwèi, Classification of Words[1] in the early 17th century, in which the radicals were revised and reduced to 214.

Nowadays students often ask the following questions:

1. Why is the three-dotted water radical 氵 in the four-stroke group?
2. How can we spot the proper radical in a character that may have several possibilities, such as: 努,好,秋,如…
3. How can we locate hidden radicals, such as those in: 承,為,表…

From our experience, these questions are good questions. However, they are difficult to answer. Probably we would have said: "You have to go through a period of trial-and-error. When you are more experienced, you will have more chance of hitting than missing them."

In addition to the selection (or guessing) of proper radicals, stroke-count is another problem. Some students simply do not have the patience in counting strokes. Then they might give up Chinese characters and Chinese language entirely.

Therefore there is need for a new system to simplify procedure and reduce frustration.

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[1] Mei Ying-Dzwo 梅膺祚 Dž Hwèi (Classification of Words)

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Several attempts have been made in the past several decades. First, Mr. Wáng Yún-Wǔ's 王雲五 famous Four-Corner Index number System[1] and in 1963 Mr. Chén Shwùn-Chí's 陳舜齊 Head-Tail Index Number System[2] are completely from the 214 radicals and stroke-count. They give ten index numbers according to the form of the strokes.

The New China Dictionary[3] reduced the number of radicals to 186. Furthermore, it gives every possible entry for a character; for instance, the word nǔ 努 can be found under any one of the three radicals 女 , 又 or 力 .

Mr. Kuo Y-Tze (Pei-Hou) 郭毅之(培厚) introduced a new system in his Modern Chinese-English Dictionary[4]. The dictionary offers a new system of direct word-group finding according to the author's "Romanized Phonetic Spelling Basic Word Finding System". There are 976 groups, arranged in alphabetical order. The dictionary provides two index lists; one is arranged by stroke-count, the other in alphabetical order.

Professor C. C. Huang invented his "T-I" system in his dictionary[5]. The "T-I" is the abbreviation of "total number of strokes plus initial-stroke". First, he classified characters by stroke-count, then sub-divided into four groups by the initial stroke (in the order of: a dot, a horizontal stroke, a vertical stroke, and a down-left stroke).

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[1]Wáng Sywé-Jé, 王學哲 A Modern Chinese-English Dictionary. Chungking: Commercial Press, 1946.

[2]Chén Shwùn-chí, Shǒu-wěi Hàumǎ Tsźdyǎn 首尾號碼詞典 Taipei: Jywéhwá Publishing Co. 1963

[3]Syīnhwá Dzdyǎn Peking: Commercial Press, 1971.

[4]Kuo Y-Tze (Pei-hou), Modern Chiiese-English Dictionary, Taipei: Chung Hua (China) Book Co. 1966.

[5]Huang, C. C., A Modern Chinese-English Dictionary for Students. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas, 1968

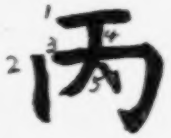
In the reading materials of the Yale series (Read Chinese I, II, III), the characters index is more than the "T-I" system becuase the characters are further su-grouped by their second strokes and third strokes. The system may be called "T-I-S-T" (total number of strokes plus initial-second and third strokes).

In the General Index of Simplified Characters[1] (Jyǎnhwàdż Dzǔng-byǎu Jyǎndż 簡化字总表检字) characters are indexed by the "T-I" system, however, their initial strokes are classified into five groups in the order of:

1. the horizontal strokes 一
2. the vertical strokes 丨
3. the down-left strokes 丿
4. a dot 丶
5. the turned strokes 乙乚

Mr. David S. Shew created a new system in his The Word Bǐng Dictionary for Students[2]. First, he classified 19 strokes into five groups in the order of:

1. the horizontal strokes 一
2. the vertical strokes 丨
3. the turned strokes (limited) 乙
4. the down-left strokes 丿
5. a dot 丶



Then all characters are grouped into these five groups by their initial strokes, again, sub-grouped by their second strokes, and if necessary, sub-sub-grouped by their third strokes. There is a ten-page GUIDE in his dictionary. Readers use the GUIDE to find the INDEX.

[1] General Index of Simplified Characters Peking: Language Reform Publishing Co. 1964

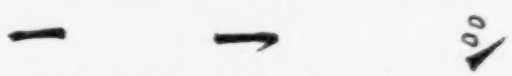
[2] Shew, David S. 萧棣煒 Bǐng-Dż Sywésheng Dżdyǎn, San Francisco: Jūngtyān Publishing Co. (1402 Powell St., S.F., Cal.) 1966

Both Professor Huang and Mr. Shew's dictionaries give the readers greater convenience. They provide all possible entries for any character. For instance, there are four entries of the word chéng 成. 成 in Huang's dictionary: (6 一), (6 丿), (7 一), and (7 丿). Mr. Shew put the word dzāng 臧 in four different places.

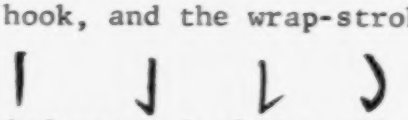
This new "initial three-stroke index" (tóu sān-bǐ jyǎndzǐǎ) is a combination of the abovementioned systems.

First, the classification of strokes and the order of their arrangement are the same in the General Index of Simplified Characters:

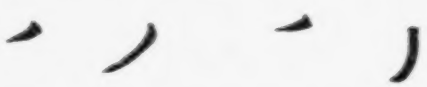
1. The first group includes the horizontal strokes,with or without a hook and the upper stroke:



2. The second group includes the vertical strokes, with or without a hook, and the wrap-strokes with a hook to the left:



3. The third group includes all down-left strokes, the long ones, the short ones, the flat ones, and the almost vertical ones:



4. The fourth group includes the dots (toward any directions), and the down-right strokes, the long ones, the short ones, and the ones with an upward hook:

The first four groups are simple strokes. Generally, the strokes go one direction without change, unless there is a hook at the end of the strokes.

5. The fifth group is a combination of above-listed four groups.

It may be a combination of a horizontal stroke and a vertical stroke, or a down-left stroke and a down-right stroke, etc.:

乙 乙 乚 フ 乞 又 阝 く 马 ク 又

Second, the procedure of this new "initial three-stroke index" system is the same as in Mr. Shew's dictionary. The first step for checking a new character is to go to the GUIDE. The second step is from the GUIDE to the INDEX.

The GUIDE in this new system contains three digits. The first digit represents the first stroke, the second digit represents the second stroke and the third digit represents the third stroke. For instance:

121 is a horizontal (1), a vertical (2), and a horizontal (1), it may be 工 , 土 , or 士.

333 is a down-left stroke, repeated three times, it may be 彡 .

332 is two down-left strokes and a vertical, it may be 彳 .

554 is two turned strokes and a dot, it may be 幺 .

100 is a horizontal stroke (no second or third) 一 .

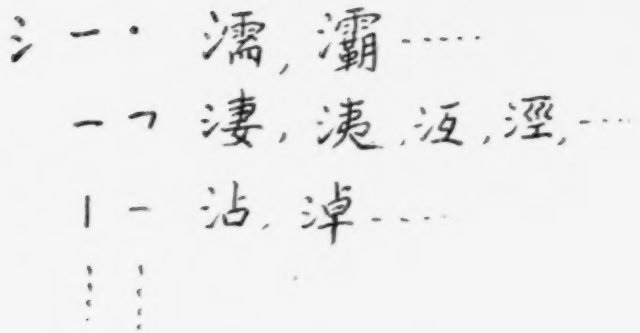
110 is two horizontal strokes (no third) 二 .

Third, in the INDEX the characters that share common components of the first three strokes will be further arranged according to the sequence of the strokes in the system. For instance, the three-dotted water section (441):

氵一一 汗, 汙, 汪, 沅 ·····

一丨 汀, 江 ·····

一丿 淆 汰 ·····



This new system is very easy to learn. However, there are still few minor problems which need further explanation.

1. The first problem is personal preference of the stroke order. for instance, for writing a heart radical, someone may prefer 442 (a dot, a dot, and a vertical · · 丨), another may prefer 424 (a dot, a vertical, and a dot · 丨 ·). In this GUIDE, as in Mr. Shew's dictionary, it has been listed in both places.

2. The second problem is to recognize strokes. Someone may consider the first stroke of the word shwùn 順 as a vertical stroke, others may recognize it as a down-left stroke. Again, it is listed in both places in the GUIDE.

3. The third problem is the differences between the printed forms and long hand. The following list shows the differences:

Printed Forms	Long Hand
益	益
兼	兼
遂	遂
眞	真
戶	户
啓	啓
言	言
社	社
羽	羽
習	習

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This new system is a combination of several systems. It needs further study and improvement.

The system is very important to our profession, language teaching. As soon as we can solve one of the basic problems in which students can find help from the dictionary, they will be independent for self-studying.

We, as teachers, must teach them: (1) to recognize strokes, (2) to learn proper stroke order in writing, and (3) to learn the differences between the printed forms and long hand.

THANKS

Thank Mr. Albert Ching-Yun Fei for his contribution in developing this new system.

November 1972

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For Head-Tail Dictionary, write to:

Mr. Ch'en Shùn-Ch'i
12-3, 35th Lane
South Chien-Kuo Rd.,
Taipei, Taiwan, China

For Bĭng-Dż Dictionary, write to:

Mr. David S. Shew
1402 Powell St.,
San Francisco, Calif. 94133

READ CHINESE BOOK ONE

A List of 300 Characters, Arranged according to

Initial Three-Stooke Index

C. K. & K. S. WU

I. Classification of strokes;

Group #1.....The horizontal strokes 一
The horizontal strokes with a hook 乛
The upper strokes 丶

Group #2.....The vertical strokes 丨
The vertical strokes with a hook 亅 𠃌
The 'wrap' strokes 乚

Group #3.....The down-left strokes 丿 ノ 𠂉

Group #4.....The down-right strokes 乀 乀 丶
The dots 丶 丶
The bent strokes 乛 乛

Group #5.....The combinations of the above four groups--change directions:

𠂆 乙 乛 𠂇 𠂉 马 𠃌

II. The Three-Digit Guide:

325 - 𠂉, 𠂇, 𠃌, 𠂇, 𠂆

The first digit is the number of the group of the first stroke in a character.

The second digit is the number of the group of the second stroke in a character.

The third digit is the number of the group of the third stroke in a character.

0 represents 'no stroke', so: 100 is 一
110 is 二
111 is 三

III. Stroke Order (see Read Chinese Book I, P. 175)

IV. No more radical-guessing, no more stroke-counting

GUI . . Three-digit GUIDE Number
CHA. . . Chinese Characters
ROM. . . Romanization, Yale system
LES . . Lesson Number, Read Chinese I

1 . . . . 一 二 三
2 . . . . 川 口
3 . . . . 人
4 . . . . 心
5 . . . . ㄎㄑㄅㄆㄋㄌㄐㄒㄓ

GUI	CHA	ROM	LES
100	一	yī	1
110	二	èr	1
111	三	sān	1
112	王	wáng	19
	玩	wán	15
	現	syàn	6
	表	byǎu	10
113	天	tyān	1
	夫	fū	14
120	十	shí	1
121	工	gūng	14
	幫	bāng	15
	城	chéng	12
	塊	kwài	7
	壞	hwài	16
	地	dì	2
	走	dzǒu	6
	起	chǐ	8
	遠	vwǎn	18
	喜	syǐ	15
	賣	mài	4
	都	dōu	4
	老	lǎu	6
	教	jyāu	13

GUI	CHA	ROM	LES
	報	bàu	13
	去	chyù	3
	打	dǎ	14
	找	jǎu	13
	把	bǎ	8
	北	běi	18
122	萬	wàn	10
	歡	hwān	15
	舊	jyòu	18
	茶	chá	14
	菜	tsài	14
	真	jǐ	18
	真	jēn	10
	南	nán	18
	正	jèng	11
	聽	tīng	6
	甚	shém	2
	難	nán	12
123	才	tsái	19
	本	běn	5
	桌	jwō	14
	想	syǎng	4
	校	syàu	13
	樣	yàng	17

GUI	CHA	ROM	LES
	極	jí	17
	長	cháng	17
124	下	syà	1
125	可	kě	4
	哥	gē	15
	歌	gē	11
	頭	tóu	2
	車	chē	13
	東	dūng	4
	更	gèng	17
	緊	jǐn	11
	事	shì	4
	再	dzài	8
	兩	lyǎng	1
	要	yào	3
	兩	syǐ	4
131	左	dzwǒ	18
132	在	dzài	2
	不	bù,bú	1
	右	yòu	18
	有	yǒu	1
	百	bǎi	6
133	願	ywàn	15
134	大	dà	1

GUI	CHA	ROM	LES
	奇	chí	19
	太	tài	9
	來	lái	3
135	五	wǔ	1
	友	yǒu	6
144	平	píng	15
150	七	chī	1
152	緊	jǐn	11
153	五	wǔ	1
154	到	dàu	2
211	上	shàng	1
	長	cháng	17
	北	běi	18
	比	bǐ	17
	菜	see 122	
212	歲	swèi	12
	些	syē	4
224	對	dwèi	12
244	小	syǎu	1
	少	shǎu	3
	當	dāng	15
	常	cháng	10
251	唱	chàng	11
	喝	hē	18

	哭	kū	15		門	mén	8		學	sywé	5	335	所	swǒ	7
	吃	chī	5		開	kāi	13		學覺	jywé jyàu	16		船	chwán	17
	呢	ne	11		問	wèn	5	322	條	tyáu	17		人	rén	1
	叫	jyàu	6		關	gwān	13		候	hòu	4		八	bā	1
	吧	ba	11	252	山	shān	17		但	dàn	19	341	拿	ná	9
	別	byé	9		買	mǎi	4		個	gè	1		會	hwèi	5
	中	jūng	1		還	hái	6		們	-men	1		錯	tswò	16
	貴	gwèi	9		回	hwéi	5	323	件	jyàn	9		錢	pù	6
	白	ì	5	253	水	shwěi	13		作	dzwò	4		錢	chyán	4
	早	dzǎu	6		四	sì	1		你	nǐ	1		鐘	jūng	8
	是	shì	1	254	黑	hēi	17	324	信	syìn	10	344	生	dzwò	5
	時	shí	4		點	dyǎn	6		住	jù	7		今	jīn	7
	昨	dzwó	7	311	生	shēng	3		進	jìn	9		念	nyàn	7
	明	míng	7		年	nyán	8		位	wèi	9		愛	ài	9
	晚	wǎn	7		毛	máu	19	325	白	bái	12		等	děng	8
	易	yì	16		手	shǒu	10		的	de	1		算	swàn	14
	睡	shwèi	15		拜	bài	9		自	dz	14		笑	syàu	14
	見	jyàn	11		看	kàn	3		邊	byān	18		筆	bǐ	10
	最	dzwèi	17		短	dwǎn	17		他	tā	1		第	dì	7
	思	sz	9		知	jī	8		兒	ér	2		飯	fàn	5
	男	nán	10		氣	chì	11	331	近	jìn	18		館	gwǎn	18
	數	shù shǔ	19	312	千	chyān	10	332	行	syíng	9		分	fēn	13
	路	lù	15		告	gàu	12		街	jyē	14	350	九	jyǒu	1
	跑	pǎu	13		先	syān	3		得	de, děi dé	13	351	月	ywè	1
	跟	gēn	11		怎	dzěm	11		從	tsúng	8		朋	péng	6
	過	gwò	13		我	wǒ	1		往	wàng	19		用	yùng	4
	因	yīn	9	315	每	měi	19		很	hěn	3	352	魚	yú	17
	國	gwó	3	321	便	pyán biàn	19		後	hòu	2		句	jyù	11

	帶 dài 15		離 lí 18		寫 chwān 18	520	了 le liǎu 2				
354	外 wài 2		次 tsì 17		寫 syě 5	521	子 dž 3				
	名 míng 16		方 rāng 2		客 kè 16		孩 hái 12				
	多 dwō 3		放 fàng 14		容 rúng 16	522	出 chū 8				
	夠 gòu 15	414	新 syīn 10		字 dž 5	523	帶 dài 15				
	臉 lyǎn 19		親 chīn 7	442	情 ching 9	525	也 yě 1				
	然 rán 19		辦 bàn 16		慢 màn 8	530	九 jyǒu 1				
411	請 chǐng 5		站 jàn 12		懂 dǔng 12	531	女 nyǔ 10				
	許 syǔ 19		意 yì 6		怕 pà 16		姓 syìng 7				
	話 hwà 3	415	刻 kè 13		忙 máng 18		好 hǎu 3				
	誰 shéi 10		忘 wàng 12		快 kwài 8	540	又 yòu 8				
	謝 syè 13	424	忙 see 442		怪 gwài 19	542	能 néng 5				
	訴 sùng 12	435	滿 wèi 6	443	火 hwǒ 13	543	以 yǐ 5				
	識 shì 14	441	半 bàn 6		父 fù 7	551	母 mǔ 7				
	說 shwō 3		着 je, jāu jáu 8	444	心 syīn 19	554	經 jīng 12				
	這 jèi 2		差 měi 16		必 bì 11		紙 jǐ 10				
	認 rèn 14		送 chà 12	445	弟 dì 12		給 gěi 3				
412	裏 lǐ 2		前 sùng 9	451	房 fáng 10		幾 jǐ 6				
	就 jyòu 5		道 chyán 2	452	禮 lǐ 9						
	高 gāu 11		法 dàu fá 8	511	書 shū 7						
413	麼 ma 2		活 fà, fǎ 16		畫 hwà 17		够 --- 夠				
	衣 yī 16		河 hé 17		那 nà, nèi nǎ, něi 2		做 --- 作				
	夜 yè 12		酒 jyǒu 18		門 see 251		館 --- 館				
	應 yīng 15		洗 syǐ 19	513	屋 wū 10		鋪 --- 鋪				
	底 dǐ 14		沒 méi 1	515	已 yǐ 12		桌 --- 棹				
	六 lyòu 1		完 wán 16		己 jǐ 14						
	病 bìng 15		定 dìng 11		比 bǐ 17						
	文 wén 16		家 jyā 7		張 jāng 11						